

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Accelerating Women's Enterprise in the MENA Region 1

MEPI Alumna Nominated as an Arab Business Leader 1

Grant \$ at Work 2

Supporting Tunisian Women Artists 2

Details on How to Apply for a MEPI Local Grant 3

About MEPI 4

MEPI Medregion Update Newsletter is produced by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Regional Office at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, Tunisia.

Editor-in-chief:
Jed Taro Dornburg
Editor:
Khaoula Touati

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Accelerating Women's Enterprise in the MENA Region OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum

On May 4th, members of the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum participated in a conference entitled "Gender Equality in Government and Business" to discuss strategies and programs to advance gender quality in the workplace.

Participants discussed how to attract talent to the public and private sectors, the pros and cons of quotas, and women's access to government and business services. MEPI is a proud supporter of both the MENA-OECD Investment Initiative as well as the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum.

At this meeting, regional representatives underlined that the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum can help capitalize on the potential of



A Group photo of the delegates attending the MENA-OECD Conference on Gender Equality in Government and Business

women's entrepreneurship in the region by supporting women's access to business support services, financing, and networks. Karen Volker, MEPI Director, encouraged collaboration with existing successful initiatives in the region, especially the MENA Businesswomen's Network. This MEPI-funded project is a vibrant, results-based network of over 2,500 business women in 12

member countries across North Africa and the Middle East. This interregional network draws on active partnerships with local businesswomen's organizations and has been directly providing, over the last three years, more than 17,000 participants in 38 cities with quality business training, business-to-business (B2B) linkages, and industry expert exchanges.

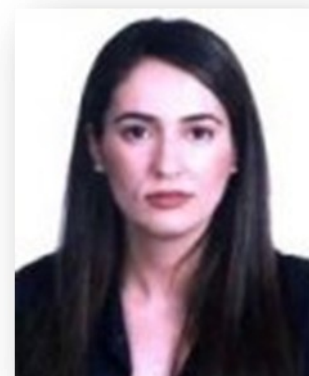
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MEPI Alumna Nominated as an Arab Business Leader

Congratulations to Dolly Choucair for being nominated as an Arab Business Leader, the only woman among four candidates. Choucair, a MEPI Business Internship Program (BIP) alumna and now head of the aviation practice group of Alem & Associates, was chosen by O2 Zone as an Arab Business Leader. Several groups, such as

the Chambers Global Guide and the Legal 500 Guide repeatedly recommended her as a leader in the aviation consultancy practice due to her accomplishment within her law firm and due to her work within the NGO community in Lebanon and in the MENA region. which gave her much visibility.

(Continued on page 4)



Dolly Choucair

Continued from page 1

Supporting Tunisian Women Artisans

The Tunisian National Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs (Chambre Nationale des Femmes Chefs d'Enterprises, CNFCE) held a workshop in collaboration with the MENA Businesswomen's Network and the Vital Voices

Women, businessmen and women, NGO representatives, the Tunisian American Chamber of Commerce (TACC), and Vital Voices.

After a brief introduction by the CNFCE president and vice president, the participants split



Workshop participants discuss ways to support export-readiness for Tunisian women artisans

Global Partnership on June 17. CNFCE is working with Vital Voices as part of the multi-country grant "Building Public-Private Partnerships for Women's Advancement." Economic and Commercial Officer Isabel Rioja-Scott and MEPI Intern Joanna Schenke attended the workshop on behalf of Embassy Tunis.

The workshop served as a meeting of the public private partnership steering committee and followed an initial June 3rd public forum. About 20 participants attended the workshop, including Tunisian governmental officials from the Ministries of Telecommunications and

into brainstorming groups to weigh the pros and cons of three different options for the partnership: creating a new center for artisan women, rehabilitating existing centers, or creating a mobile center. The CNFCE-Vital Voices project team plans to present its recommendation and action plan to the steering committee at its next meeting in July.

The participants welcomed MEPI representation and were given USB wristbands with information about the Local Grants program. They expressed great interest in Local Grants, and the MEPI RO and Embassy Tunis will follow up on potential grant proposals. ■



Standards for Financial Management System

By MEPI Grants Unit

Recipients of federal assistance funds are required by US grants regulation to have a financial and performance management system in place that safeguards those funds and ensures their effective use. According to the Code of federal Regulations, 2 CFR 215 (OMB Circular A-110) § 215.21 *"(b) standards for financial management systems shall provide for the following:"*

(1) Accurate, current and complete disclosure of the financial results of each federally-sponsored project or program in accordance with the reporting requirements set forth in § 215.52....

(2) Records that identify adequately the source and application of funds for federally-sponsored activities. These records shall contain information pertaining to Federal awards, authorizations, obligations, unobligated balances, assets, outlays, income and interest.

(3) Effective control over and accountability for all funds, property and other assets. Recipients shall adequately safeguard all such assets and assure they are used solely for authorized purposes.

(4) Comparison of outlays with budget amounts for each award. Whenever appropriate, financial information should be related to performance and unit cost data.

(5) Written procedures to minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of funds to the recipient from the U.S. Treasury and the issuance or redemption of checks, warrants or payments by other means for program purposes by the recipient.

(6) Written procedures for determining the reasonableness, allocability and allowability of costs in accordance with the provisions of the applicable Federal cost principles and the terms and conditions of the award.

(7) Accounting records including cost accounting records that are supported by source documentation."

In order to ensure that grant applicants meet the above regulations, MEPI requires that a Pre-Award Questionnaire (PAQ) be filled out. The PAQ tells us a little bit about the applicant organization's predisposition to properly manage the grant.

Additionally, some applicants/grantees may be selected for an on-site Internal Controls Assessment. In that case, qualified grants specialists from the Regional Office will visit your premises to meet some of your officers and staff members. Ideally, and when applicable, we organize meetings with the chairperson, the treasurer, the executive director, the financial manager, the bookkeeper, the cashier, the human resources officers and some project coordinators and the procurement officer. Our staff will ask series of questions on how the work is organized. They will also consult the manual of policies and procedures and check how they are implemented, if available. Our staff may ask to check some documents like various the registration documents with different authorities, examples of records related to bookkeeping, banking and cash management, property management, personnel, procurement of goods and contractual services, etc...

Our staff will also provide advice and guidance on how the internal controls could be enhanced to improve the organization's financial management and to increase donors' confidence. We also issue the organization a report containing weaknesses and recommendations for improvement.

When serious deficiencies are noted, the Grants Officer may require the applicant/recipient to implement corrective actions either prior to being awarded the grant or according to a timeline that will be incorporated in the award agreement. ■

Continued from page 1

The OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum held its founding meeting in Tunis on March 29th, with the support of the World work of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme. Coming up in 2010, the MENA 100 Business Plan Competition



Top three winners of the 2009 edition of MENA 100 receive cash awards through the support of sponsors and partners

Association of Women Entrepreneurs. The OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum is a regional partnership which leverages the collective expertise of the private sector, governments, civil society, and experts to foster the expansion of women-led businesses and women's employment in the Middle East and North Africa. The Forum's activities include capacity-building training and coaching as well as targeted policy assessments and recommendations to support women in business. The Forum achieves results through an interactive web platform, regional and sub-regional workshops, and by mainstreaming its activities with the broader business climate will help bridge the equity gap for women entrepreneurs by giving them the opportunity to present their innovative business plans to investors. The MENA 100 is a competition which aims to encourage and identify the 100 best entrepreneurs in the Arab world. Finalists will present their business plans to investors at the MENA 100 marketplace in Manama in November. The MENA 100 was launched in June 2009 by the MENA-OECD Investment Programme's Enterprise Financing Network (EFN), in co-operation with the MENA Centre for Investment in Bahrain, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). ■

Welcome to New MEPI Members

The MEPI Regional Office in Tunis is very pleased to welcome two new colleagues to the team: Khaled Abou El Naga joins us at the Regional Office in Tunis as our new Program Assistant and Mark Fernando is the new MEPI Coordinator in Jerusalem. Their biographic information is below, and we wish them both a warm welcome to MEPI !

Khaled Abou El Naga has worked in several fields including media, journalism, public relations, management, translation, tourism and teaching. He has been and FSI Arabic language and culture instructor for seven years before joining MEPI.



*Khaled Abou El Naga
Program Assistant*

Mark Fernando is the new MEPI coordinator for the West Bank and Gaza and East Jerusalem. Mark's background is in international affairs; he worked with the World Affairs Council of Washington, DC in the capacity of program director for three years prior to his relocation to Jerusalem. While at the council,



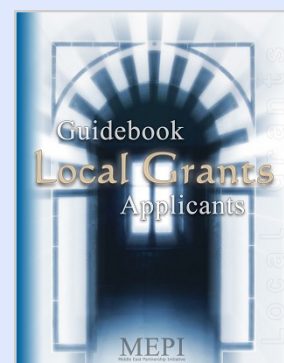
*Mark Fernando
MEPI Coordinator*

Mark developed and conducted public programs ranging from intimate discussions with foreign policy thinkers to high-profile events with world leaders. He holds a M.S in international security and global governance from Birkbeck College, University of London and a B.A in communications and international studies from John Carroll University, Cleveland. Mark served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Kyrgyz Republic, where he met his wife, Johanna, who is a foreign service officer in the consular section of the U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem. Mark is originally from Chicago, Illinois, and cheers for the Loyola Academy Ramblers. ■

Submit Your Grant Applications Now!

Funding is available now for Local Grants. Please contact your country's U.S. Embassy MEPI Committee and see the guidebook available on our [website](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov) for step-by-step instructions in English and Arabic.

www.medregion.mepi.state.gov



MEPI Alumni

Dolly participated in the Business Internship Program (BIP), now called the Legal and Business Fellowship Program (LBFP). During the MEPI Business Internship Program, Dolly was hosted by Duke University in North Carolina, where she attended a leadership program. She was a legal intern with Fulbright & Jaworski International Law firm in Washington D.C., and then moved to Houston, Texas as an in-house lawyer for Shell Oil. She felt lucky to have participated in two MEPI-funded internships which changed and improved her life and her business perspective. She was exposed to U.S. aspects of the legal field, which enriched her managerial skills and client approach. She became a member of a team and benefited from this close interaction.

Upon her return, she established the aviation practice group, and has brought in regional and international contracts.

By introducing this line of business within the legal field, Dolly managed to join business and law which was a very

challenging task for which her U.S. training and acquired knowledge became very handy. She is now the head of the aviation practice group and senior associate in her law firm, a big achievement for a woman her age.

Dolly brought new business to her company, and clients from all over the world (Europe, US, Asia) hire her services for legal advice, taxation & insurance services, as well as consulting on strategy and financial policies. Dolly learned a lot from the teamwork within a legal structure, which is not a usual

practice within in the Lebanese Law firms. Dolly helped found the Lebanese League for Women in Business (LLWB) by registering the NGO and preparing by-laws and all necessary legal structures. A founding member and former secretary, Dolly still advises LLWB on legal matters. She also prepared the by-laws, registered the MEPI Lebanon Alumni Association (MEPI-LAA), and occupies the position of secretary and official representative to the government. Dolly is also a co-founding member and board member of the MEPI Alumni

MEPI Alumna Nominated as an Arab Business Leader



This picture was taken during the executive MBA at Duke University-North Carolina.

“MEPI-BIP program is one of the most important and rewarding MEPI exchange programs as it exposes the participant long enough to the US culture and life.”

founded think tank: the research and Policy Studies Society of Lebanon (RPSSL). She also helped develop and implement programs dedicated to empower women in business and law in collaboration with American Bar Association (ABA). She also strives, through her contacts with a wide NGO network, to advocate for legal amendments affecting women's participation in politics and for women's rights. Choucair is an active and devoted member of civil society; she helped several NGOs through their legal procedures with the Ministry of Interior and continues to bring valuable contributions to the MEPI Alumni Association. ■



Middle East Partnership Initiative

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, is a unique program designed to engage directly with and invest in the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI works to create vibrant partnerships with citizens to foster the development of pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies throughout the MENA region. MEI partners with local, regional and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments.

MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed in the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, the MEPI Regional Office Tunis administers MEPI local projects in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and West Bank/Gaza and accounts for more than \$5 million in program funding in 2010. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, The Tunis RO provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants) as well as supporting visits, seminars and training programs to advance reform. ■

MEPI Regional Office Tunis
U.S. Embassy Tunis
Les Berges du Lac— 1053
Tunis, Tunisia

Phone: +216 71 107 058
Fax: +216 71 107 436

E-mail: mepi-medregion@state.gov
Website: medregion.mepi.state.gov

To subscribe or unsubscribe please send us an e-mail at: Mepi.medregion@state.gov